What is claimed is:

1 1.   A method, comprising:

2   receiving a signal that indicates at least one item;

3   ascertaining whether the at least one item is associated with an offer for a

4 rebate;

5   generating a code if the at least one item is associated with an offer for a

6 rebate;

7   outputting a signal that represents the code;

8   outputting an offer for a rebate in exchange for establishing a subscription to a

9 periodical; and

10   charging an item price.

1 2.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of receiving the signal that indicates

2 the at least one item comprises:

3   receiving the signal via a bar code scanner.

1 3.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of receiving the signal that indicates

2 the at least one item comprises:

3   optically scanning a bar code that indicates the at least one item.

1 4.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of ascertaining whether the at least

2 one item is associated with an offer for a rebate comprises:

3   searching a database for a record that corresponds to the at least one item; and

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4   ascertaining from the record whether the at least one item is associated with an

5   offer for a rebate.

1   5.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of generating the code comprises:

2   selecting the code from a plurality of predetermined codes.

1   6.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of generating the code comprises:

2   generating the code randomly.

1   7.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of generating the code comprises:

2   encrypting at least one datum.

1   8.   The method of claim 7, in which the step of encrypting at least one datum

2   comprises:

3   encrypting at least one of

4   the periodical,

5   an item price of the at least one item,

6   an account identifier,

7   a merchant identifier that identifies a merchant,

8   a period of validity,

9   an item identifier that identifies the at least one item, and

10   a customer identifier that identifies a customer.

1   9.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of generating the code comprises:

2   generating the code based on at least one of

3   the periodical,

4   an item price of the at least one item,

5   an account identifier,

6   a merchant identifier that identifies a merchant,

7   a period of validity,

8   an item identifier that identifies the at least one item, and

9   a customer identifier that identifies a customer.

1   10.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of outputting the signal that

2 represents the code comprises:

3   printing an indicium that represents the code.

1   11.   The method of claim 10, in which the indicium comprises a machine-readable

2 indicium.

1   12.   The method of claim 11, in which the indicium comprises a bar code.

1   13.   The method of claim 1, in which the step of outputting an offer comprises:

2   generating a message.

1   14.   The method of claim 13, in which the step of outputting an offer comprises:

2   printing an indicium that represents a message.

1   15.   The method of claim 13, in which the step of outputting an offer comprises:

2   displaying a message on a video monitor.

1   16.   The method of claim 13, in which the step of generating the message

2   comprises:

3   selecting the message based on the at least one item.

1   17.   The method of claim 13, in which the step of generating the message

2   comprises:

3   selecting the message from a plurality of predetermined messages.

1   18.   The method of claim 1, in which the charging the item price comprises:

2   receiving a credit card number that identifies a credit card account; and

3   charging the item price to the credit card account.

1   19.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   printing an indicium that represents a contact identifier.

1   20.   The method of claim 19, in which the indicium that represents the contact

2   identifier represents at least one of a telephone number, an electronic mail address and

3   a URL.

1   21.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   selecting a contact identifier based on the at least one item.

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1   22.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   selecting the periodical based on the at least one item.

1   23.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   ascertaining whether a predetermined rule is satisfied.

1   24.   The method of claim 23, in which the step of outputting the signal that

2   represents the code is performed only if the predetermined rule is satisfied.

1   25.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving a customer identifier that identifies a customer that purchases the at

3   least one item.

1   26.   The method of claim 25, in which the step of receiving a customer identifier

2   comprises:

3   receiving an account identifier that identifies the account.

1   27.   The method of claim 26, in which the account identifier comprises a credit

2   card account number and in which the account is a credit card account.

1   28.   The method of claim 25, in which the step of receiving a customer identifier

2   comprises:

3   receiving the customer identifier via at least one of a card reader and a bar

4   code scanner.

1   29.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   associating the code with the rebate.

1   30.   The method of claim 29, in which the step of associating the code with the

2   rebate comprises:

3   storing the code and an indication of the rebate in a record of a database.

1   31.   The method of claim 1, in which the at least one item comprises an issue of

2   the periodical.

1   32.   The method of claim 1, in which the code indicates at least one of

2   the periodical,

3   an item price of the at least one item,

4   an account identifier,

5   a merchant identifier that identifies a merchant,

6   a period of validity,

7   an item identifier that identifies the at least one item, and

8   a customer identifier that identifies a customer.

1   33.   The method of claim 1, in which the code comprises a plurality of digits.

1   34.   The method of claim 1, in which the code comprises a plurality of

2   alphanumeric characters.

1   35.   A method, comprising:

2   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical;

3   receiving a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction with the

4   request;

5   ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

6   providing a rebate if the code is valid.

1   36.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of receiving the signal that

2   represents the code comprises:

3   receiving a DTMF signal.

1   37.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of receiving the signal that

2   represents the code comprises:

3   receiving the signal that represents the code via an IVRU.

1   38.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   ascertaining whether the code corresponds to the periodical.

1   39.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   ascertaining whether the code indicates the periodical.

1   40.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   decrypting the code.

1   41.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   ascertaining whether the code is at least one of a set of predetermined codes.

1   42.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   ascertaining a period of validity of the code.

1   43.   The method of claim 42, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   ascertaining whether the period of validity has elapsed.

1   44.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of ascertaining whether the code is

2   valid comprises:

3   ascertaining from the code at least one of

4   the periodical,

5   an item price of at least one item,

6   an account,

7   a merchant identifier that identifies a merchant,

8   a period of validity,

9   an item identifier that identifies the at least one item, and

10   a customer identifier that identifies a customer.

1   45.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of providing a rebate comprises:

2   reducing a price that is charged for a subsequent purchase.

1   46.   The method of claim 45, in which the step of reducing the price comprises:

2   reading an indicium;

3   determining from the indicium whether a subscription was established; and

4   reducing the price that is charged for the subsequent purchase if the

5 subscription was established.

1   47.   The method of claim 45, in which the step of reducing the price comprises:

2   reducing the price by an item price of a previously-purchased item.

1   48.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of providing a rebate comprises:

2   crediting a rebate amount to an account.

1   49.   The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2   ascertaining a rebate amount from the code.

1   50.   The method of claim 35, in which the step of providing a rebate comprises:

2   establishing a rebate amount for which the merchant is to credit the customer.

1   51.   The method of claim 35, in which the code indicates at least one of

2   the periodical,

3   an item price of an item previously purchased,

4   an account,

5   a merchant identifier that identifies a merchant,

6   a period of validity,

7   an item identifier that identifies the item, and

8   a customer identifier that identifies a customer.

1   52.   A method, comprising:

2   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical;

3   receiving a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction with the

4 request;

5   ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

6   crediting a rebate amount to an account if the code is valid.

1   53.   The method of claim 52, in which the step of crediting the account by the

2 rebate amount comprises:

3   crediting the account by an item price of a previously-purchased item.

1   54.   The method of claim 52, in which the step of crediting the account by the

2 rebate amount comprises:

3   generating a textual description of the rebate amount for printing on a billing

4 statement of the account.

1   55.   The method of claim 54, in which the textual description comprises an

2   indication of at least one of

3   the periodical,

4   an item that was previously purchased, and

5   a merchant from which the item was purchased.

1   56.   The method of claim 52, further comprising:

2   ascertaining the rebate amount from the code.

1   57.   The method of claim 52, further comprising:

2   establishing a subscription to the periodical.

1   58.   The method of claim 57, further comprising:

2   charging a subscription price to the account.

1   59.   The method of claim 52, in which the account is a credit card account.

1   60.   The method of claim 59, further comprising:

2   receiving a signal that indicates a credit card number that identifies the credit

3   card account.

1   61.   The method of claim 60, in which the step of receiving the signal that

2   indicates the credit card number comprises:

3   receiving the signal that indicates the credit card number via a card reader that

4   reads a magnetic strip.

1   62.   A method, comprising:

2   receiving a signal that indicates at least one item to be purchased by a

3   customer, the item having an item price;

4   charging the item price to an account of the customer;

5   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical, the

6   subscription being on behalf of the customer;

7   ascertaining whether the customer purchased the at least one item; and

8   crediting the item price to the account if the customer purchased the at least

9   one item.

1   63.   The method of claim 62, further comprising:

2   receiving a customer identifier that identifies the customer, the customer

3   identifier being received before the step of charging the item price to the account of

4   the customer.

1   64.   The method of claim 63, in which the step of receiving a signal that indicates a

2   request for a subscription comprises:

3   ·   receiving the customer identifier.

1   65.   The method of claim 62, in which the at least one item comprises an issue of

2   the periodical.

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1   66.   A method, comprising:

2   receiving a signal that indicates at least one item;

3   outputting a signal that represents a code;

4   charging an item price to an account;

5   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical, the

6   signal that indicates a request for a subscription being received after the step of

7   outputting;

8   receiving a signal that represents the code;

9   ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

10   crediting the account by the item price if the code is valid.

1   67.   A method, comprising:

2   establishing a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on behalf of

3   a customer;

4   charging to a customer account a subscription price that corresponds to the

5   subscription;

6   ascertaining whether the customer purchased at least one item associated with

7   an offer for a rebate, the at least one item having an associated item price; and

8   crediting the item price to the customer account if the customer purchased the

9   at least one item.

1   68.   The method of claim 67, further comprising:

2   crediting an account of a merchant from which the customer purchased the at

3   least one item.

1   69.   A method, comprising:

2   establishing a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on behalf of

3   a customer;

4   charging to a customer account a subscription price that corresponds to the

5   subscription;

6   ascertaining whether the customer purchased at least one item associated with

7   an offer for a rebate; and

8   crediting an account of a merchant from which the customer purchased the at

9   least one item if the customer purchased the at least one item, the account being

10   credited for at least an item price of the at least one item.

1   70.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for receiving a signal that indicates at least one item;

3   means for ascertaining whether the at least one item is associated with an offer

4   for a rebate;

5   means for generating a code if the at least one item is associated with an offer

6   for a rebate;

7   means for outputting a signal that represents the code;

8   means for outputting an offer for a rebate in exchange for establishing a

9   subscription to a periodical; and

10   means for charging an item price.

1   71.   A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2   implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3   perform the steps of:

4   receiving a signal that indicates at least one item;

5   ascertaining whether the at least one item is associated with an offer for a

6   rebate;

7   generating a code if the at least one item is associated with an offer for a

8   rebate;

9   outputting a signal that represents the code;

10   outputting an offer for a rebate in exchange for establishing a subscription to a

11   periodical; and

12   charging an item price.

1   72.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4   controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   receive a signal that indicates at least one item;

7   ascertain whether the at least one item is associated with an offer for a

8   rebate;

9   generate a code if the at least one item is associated with an offer for a

10   rebate;

11   output a signal that represents the code;

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12   output an offer for a rebate in exchange for establishing a subscription

13 to a periodical; and

14   charge an item price.

1 73. An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

3 periodical;

4   means for receiving a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction

5 with the request;

6   means for ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

7   means for providing a rebate if the code is valid.

1 74. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2 implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3 perform the steps of:

4   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical;

5   receiving a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction with the

6 request;

7   ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

8   providing a rebate if the code is valid.

1 75. An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4 controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   receive a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

7 periodical;

8   receive a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction with the

9 request;

10   ascertain whether the code is valid; and

11   provide a rebate if the code is valid.

1 76. An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

3 periodical;

4   means for receiving a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction

5 with the request;

6   means for ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

7   means for crediting a rebate amount to an account if the code is valid.

1 77. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2 implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3 perform the steps of:

4   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical;

5   receiving a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction with the

6 request;

7   ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

8   crediting a rebate amount to an account if the code is valid.

1   78.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4   controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   receive a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

7   periodical;

8   receive a signal that represents a code provided in conjunction with the

9   request;

10   ascertain whether the code is valid; and

11   credit a rebate amount to an account if the code is valid.

1   79.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for receiving a signal that indicates at least one item to be purchased by

3   a customer, the item having an item price;

4   means for charging the item price to an account of the customer;

5   means for receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

6   periodical, the subscription being on behalf of the customer;

7   means for ascertaining whether the customer purchased the at least one item;

8   and

9   means for crediting the item price to the account if the customer purchased the

10   at least one item.

1   80.   A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2   implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3   perform the steps of:

4   receiving a signal that indicates at least one item to be purchased by a

5   customer, the item having an item price;

6   charging the item price to an account of the customer;

7   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical, the

8   subscription being on behalf of the customer;

9   ascertaining whether the customer purchased the at least one item; and

10   crediting the item price to the account if the customer purchased the at least

11   one item.

1   81.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4   controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   receive a signal that indicates at least one item to be purchased by a

7   customer, the item having an item price;

8   charge the item price to an account of the customer;

9   receive a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

10   periodical, the subscription being on behalf of the customer;

11   ascertain whether the customer purchased the at least one item; and

12   credit the item price to the account if the customer purchased the at

13   least one item.

1   82.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for receiving a signal that indicates at least one item;

3   means for outputting a signal that represents a code;

4   means for charging an item price to an account;

5   means for receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

6   periodical after outputting the signal that represents the code;

7   means for receiving a signal that represents the code;

8   means for ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

9   means for crediting the account by the item price if the code is valid.

1   83.   A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2   implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3   perform the steps of:

4   receiving a signal that indicates at least one item;

5   outputting a signal that represents a code;

6   charging an item price to an account;

7   receiving a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a periodical, the

8   signal that indicates a request for a subscription being received after the step of

9   outputting;

10   receiving a signal that represents the code;

11   ascertaining whether the code is valid; and

12   crediting the account by the item price if the code is valid.

1   84.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4   controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   receive a signal that indicates at least one item;

7   output a signal that represents a code;

8   charge an item price to an account;

9   receive a signal that indicates a request for a subscription to a

10   periodical, the signal that indicates a request for a subscription being received after

11   the step of outputting;

12   receive a signal that represents the code;

13   ascertain whether the code is valid; and

14   credit the account by the item price if the code is valid.

1   85.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for establishing a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on

3   behalf of a customer;

4   means for charging to a customer account a subscription price that

5   corresponds to the subscription;

6   means for ascertaining whether the customer purchased at least one item

7   associated with an offer for a rebate, the at least one item having an associated item

8   price; and

9   means for crediting the item price to the customer account if the customer

10   purchased the at least one item.

1   86.   A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2   implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3   perform the steps of:

4   establishing a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on behalf of

5   a customer;

6   charging to a customer account a subscription price that corresponds to the

7   subscription;

8   ascertaining whether the customer purchased at least one item associated with

9   an offer for a rebate, the at least one item having an associated item price; and

10   crediting the item price to the customer account if the customer purchased the

11   at least one item.

1   87.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4   controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   establish a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on

7   behalf of a customer;

8   charge to a customer account a subscription price that corresponds to

9   the subscription;

10   ascertain whether the customer purchased at least one item associated

11   with an offer for a rebate, the at least one item having an associated item price; and

12   credit the item price to the customer account if the customer purchased

13   the at least one item.

1   88.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for establishing a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on

3   behalf of a customer;

4   means for charging to a customer account a subscription price that

5   corresponds to the subscription;

6   means for ascertaining whether the customer purchased at least one item

7   associated with an offer for a rebate; and

8   means for crediting an account of a merchant from which the customer

9   purchased the at least one item if the customer purchased the at least one item, the

10   account being credited for at least an item price of the at least one item.

1   89.   A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for

2   implementing a method, the processing instructions for directing a computer to

3   perform the steps of:

4   establishing a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on behalf of

5   a customer;

6   charging to a customer account a subscription price that corresponds to the

7   subscription;

8   ascertaining whether the customer purchased at least one item associated with

9   an offer for a rebate; and

10   crediting an account of a merchant from which the customer purchased the at

11   least one item if the customer purchased the at least one item, the account being

12   credited for at least an item price of the at least one item.

1   90.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   a processor;

3   a memory connected to the processor, the memory for storing a program for

4   controlling the processor; and

5   the processor operative with the program to:

6   establish a subscription to a periodical, the subscription being on

7   behalf of a customer;

8   charge to a customer account a subscription price that corresponds to

9   the subscription;

10   ascertain whether the customer purchased at least one item associated

11   with an offer for a rebate; and

12   credit an account of a merchant from which the customer purchased

13   the at least one item if the customer purchased the at least one item, the account being

14   credited for at least an item price of the at least one item.